The Christian Delivered from the Fear of Death.

A DISCOURSE

BY THE

REV. DR. FULLER,

PREACHED DECEMBER 1, 1861.

PRINTED FOR THEIR PRIVATE USE,

BY

MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH BAPTIST CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

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Baltimore, December 10, 1861.

REV. DR. R. FULLER:—

DEAR BROTHER:—It is the belief of the members of the Church, and others who loved, esteemed, and honored your daughter, and who are not willing that the sermon preached on the Sabbath after her death, should be lost—that its publication would be the means of doing much good; and we hope you will consent to furnish a copy for that purpose.

Affectionately, your Brethren,

WM. T. FOSTER,
EUGENE LEVERING,
THOS. M. JOHNSON,
JEFFERSON SCHULTZE,
A. A. CHAPMAN,
WM. CRANE,
HIRAM WOODS, JR.,
W. H. PERKINS,
A. J. LOWNDES.

Baltimore, Dec. 13, 1861.

BELOVED BRETHREN:

You are aware that I had no written discourse. The manuscript sent was prepared afterwards, as I was notified of your kind wishes, but it gives the sermon with some accuracy.

"As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing;" none are always rejoicing, but those who as to earthly things have cause for sorrow; then is fulfilled that promise, "That my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

My toils, prayers, praises, joys, sorrows, life, death, belong to the Church; I therefore comply with your request. But—for reasons you will at once appreciate—I beg that there be printed only as many copies as the members desire to have, and that there may not be what is properly a "publication."

Very affectionately your brother and pastor,

RICHARD FULLER.

Messrs. W. T. FOSTER,
EUGENE LEVERING,
THOMAS M. JOHNSON,
JEFFERSON SCHULTZE,
A. J. LOWNDES,
WM. CRANE,
HIRAM WOODS, JR.,
A. A. CHAPMAN,
W. H. PERKINS.

SERMON.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. HEB. 2: 14, 15.

"Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." It may seem hard that—besides their studies, toils and sacrifices—pastors should be smitten by God for the sake of their flocks; but any sorrow should be welcome to us, when we remember what He endured who "loved the Church and gave himself for it." The Scriptures, indeed, represent this as a sublime privilege, that to us it is given thus to be partakers of Christ's afflictions —"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." Nor can tongue tell, nor thought conceive the sweetness of those consolations which are mercifully vouchsafed to ministers, while passing through this discipline, by Him "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The passage selected for this morning comes to you from a chamber in which—with a triumph for transcending all I had ever witnessed, or read, or conceived—death was swallowed up in victory. During the last four days of her

illness, the physician assured me that my sainted child suffered the pangs of a hundred deaths; but her soul was filled with unutterable blessedness. While complying with the prescriptions of her medical attendants, she desired that no anodynes might be administered, lest they should affect her mind. "The cup that my Father hath given me," she said, "shall I not drink it?" "My body suffers, but my soul is flooded with happiness." "I have no wish but to glorify God by my death." "How ineffably precious is Jesus to me, how I love and adore him." After remarking that she had all her life been afraid to die, she repeated the words just read as our text, exclaiming, "Not a fear now, not a doubt; all is joy unspeakable and full of glory."

My beloved brethren, wherever I may be, I am still thinking of you; and I no sooner heard this last remark, than my mind reverted to you. I said, I will preach to them from those verses—I must seek to arm them with these defences, these heavenly consolations against death.

The Apostle is speaking of the children of God. "Forasmuch then, as the children, &c., &c.;" the same "children" mentioned in the preceding verse. The Devil, who "hath the power of death," is careful not to alarm his victims; he disguises from them the formidable character of death. Hence philosophers falsely so called, libertines, duellists, men of the world, and worldly professors, can, like guilty Jonah, sleep on, regardless of their danger. The God of this world blinds their minds, till they glide over the precipice; they die as the fool dieth. The text refers to the children of God. Of them it declares, that the tempter—by inspiring a dread of death—often impairs their joy, keeps them under a miserable bondage—literally, depresses them; and that the incarnation and death of the Son of God ought to liberate them from this servile yoke, dispel their apprehensions, and cause them to rise to a triumphant superiority over all fear of death. Let us meditate upon a truth which so deeply concerns each of us, and which is so full of consolation.

I.—Sitting, as I have sat for several days and nights, looking death in the face, and seeing in that face only smiles, I asked myself, What then is it which renders death so universally formidable? And the first answer was, The impenetrable veil which shrouds the future, the darkness which, to sense and reason, hangs so gloomily over all beyond the grave. Love keeps its vigils at the bedside of one dearer to you than life. At this post of observation you watch the insidious, inexorable progress of the disease. The fatal moment at length arrives. You embrace your child, so beloved and cherished. You exchange the tenderest adieus. Gradually an invisible curtain descends between you and the object of these warm and yearning affections. In a moment a separation takes place most mysterious and awful; there is a silence which no cries, no imploring appeals can break. Those lips which had just spoken to you in such endearing accents are sealed. The hands you still hold, and whose last pressure told you so much, are relaxed. The eyes which a moment before had beamed upon you with such heavenly softness are quenched. And the question breaks in on the heart with the power and earnestness of eternity—Is this the termination of life? or is there another, an immortal life, upon which the soul has entered?

And there is no question which can so agitate the human mind. Oh, this is no matter of cold abstract speculation. Every day it is pressing upon the inmost spirit of some mourner bending over the couch of death. Every day some Martha and Mary are shedding floods of tears for a brother, who had been to them friend, counsellor, protector. Every day some Joseph is mourning for his father with a lamentation so bitter, that "the place is called Abel Mizraim;" some Rachel is weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted; some David is exclaiming, "O, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee." Yes, each day, hour, minute, second, some human heart is cleft in twain, and pours its unavailing bursts of anguish, or sits in a silent agony more terrible than the

most piercing shrieks and wailings. Now, need I tell you that a heart thus bowed down cannot be satisfied with conjectures and peradventures? No, it needs solid, stable consolation; it requires a light from heaven to dissipate the obscurity of the future, a revelation from God to lift the veil and dispel all fear and misgiving.

I do not undervalue the arguments for an indestructible life which reason furnishes; and, as the subject is of such vast concern, I will indicate, in so many words, those which seem to me of most value.

First, we carry within ourselves the instinctive consciousness of a spiritual principle distinct from, and infinitely superior to, the material body. When you use your tongue to utter, or your fingers to write your thoughts, you know it is not the tongue nor the fingers which think; they are only the instruments employed by the mind, the spiritual faculty. We compare, reason, reflect, contrive, remember, hope, love; but it is palpably absurd to suppose that these are acts of our physical organization. Now, whether this spiritual principle shall live forever or be destroyed, depends entirely upon the will of God; and God has written upon our very nature some intimations of its immortal existence.

For he has impressed upon humanity, wherever it is diffused, a conviction of existence beyond the tomb. No nation has ever been discovered which did not cling to this faith. Whence this universal belief? That which has been held as certain by all men, everywhere, and at all times, assuredly seems to be a truth either written on the structure of the soul, or transmitted from an original revelation communicated at our creation.

Another fact. We are endowed by God with irrepressible aspirations and longings for a happiness which we know can never be attained in this life, for a happiness which is eternal. Is not this yearning a prophecy? The body has no appetites for which God has not provided; is it possible that this hungering and thirsting of the soul is never to be gratified? The future, like the past, is noth-

ing to a brute, it lives only in the present. To man, the present is comparatively little; to him the transcendent value of life—its happiness and dignity—is in memory and hope. Hence the very idea of annihilation is overwhelming to him. He instinctively revolts at the very thought, that memory, hope, reason, love ever can be destroyed. And it is a most instructive—I had almost said a conclusive fact, that this horror of extinction, this instinct of endless duration, this anticipation of immortal life, becomes more articulate and stronger, just as the soul becomes holy;—that is, just as its views are clear, and its dictates and wishes in harmony with the will of God concerning it.

I know that, look where we will around us, the prospect is gloomy enough as to the perpetuation of life. The vegetable and animal creations are ever decaying and perishing. So, too, with human existence. "One generation passeth away, and another cometh." The darkness, corruption, oblivion of the tomb swallow up race after race, and no trace of them remains. In all this, however, we see only "the dust returning to the dust from which it was taken." The Scriptures declare that "The Spirit returns to God who gave it;" and to argue that, because material substances decay, therefore the soul must perish, is to overlook entirely the distinctions between matter and spirit.

Observe carefully any merely material development, and you will find that it soon attains its completion and then ceases. This is true of all vegetable growth, of all animal life, even of that noblest organism, the human frame. But the more the soul expands, the more it unfolds boundless powers of growth and expansion. Nay, the very properties of matter require that its increase should be soon arrested. If a tree should continue to grow, it would cast its shade over the land and prevent the growth of other trees. But the more the soul is enlarged, the more invigorating and blessed are the influences it exerts over other souls. Extend this thought into eternity, and you

will feel something of the meaning of that expression, "The power of an endless life," the power of the soul to dilate its own divine faculties through eternity, and through eternity to diffuse happiness upon other souls. Ponder, too, another distinction between spirit and matter. The latter, when it decays, is not destroyed; it still exists, and passes into other, often into higher forms. But if my mind, thought, reason, conscience, memory, hope, love of truth, of purity, of God, become extinct, there is utter and unutterable destruction. For these are peculiar to myself, and can never belong to any other being.

We are sometimes told of man's insignificance. I might pronounce this croaking a libel; but, admitting all that is said of man's meanness, I affirm that a being who can know himself, and lament his inferiority to his own standard of intellectual and moral perfection, cannot be insignificant. He is great—greater than the earth, greater than the stars, greater than the sun, greater than all the material universe; for the earth, the stars, the sun, the material universe are all unconscious of their own existence, nor can they conceive of, and aspire after higher and more splendid creations.

But man's guilt and depravity. Be it so. What then? This very consciousness of guilt is an intimation—a very strong intimation of immortality. For, if there were no future life, no judgment, no retribution after death, conscience could not exert its tremendous power. The sense of sin is terrible, because we feel that the consequences of sin are not exhausted here, that its real punishment will be inflicted hereafter.

Let me only add that the scenes often presented in the chamber of dying Christians furnish an evidence almost irresistible that the soul does not decay with the decay of the physical system. Those superhuman triumphs amidst convulsions of pain—those ineffable joys which transport the soul while disease and anguish shoot through every nerve and fibre of the material frame—those songs of exultation in the very moment when the body is dissolving—

it is almost impossible to witness such a spectacle, without feeling that there is in man the germ of an imperishable existence, that he is destined by God for immortality.

I might multiply reflections like these. I do not pretend, however, that these arguments, with the addition of others, would establish a certainty. Still, if man is created for future and unwasting life, I would expect reason to give some intimation of this magnificent truth; and I think we have enough to awaken presumption, expectation, a well founded hope.

But, my brethren —when just parted by death from one most loving, lovely, and beloved—presumption, expectation, hope, will not do. "I hope there is something after death;"—this was all that the wisest and best of the ancient philosophers could say. But O, cruel consolation, excruciating conjecture which soon remits the heart to the most agonizing doubts and apprehensions. No, no; guesses, peradventures, probabilities will not do; we need proof, assurance; let me have these, let the veil be removed; let me know certainly that the being so dear has been translated to a sphere of immortal life; and I am satisfied, I dry my tears; death is disarmed of this terror, death is but the beginning of a higher, sublimer existence, death is swallowed up in victory. Give me this assurance, ———————— but who can give it to me? Five hundred generations have passed into that shadowy land, but no messenger, no whisper has come back from the tomb. Worlds were little to barter for the certainty, but worlds cannot purchase it. I ask the earth, I conjure the skies, I weary the heights and torture the depths with my imploring cries;—but earth and sky, height and depth return only a cold, dead, chilling echo. Where, then, can assurance be obtained? Blessed be God, there is a teacher who perfectly ascertains every thing here. The Cross towers like a beacon between that dusky world and ours, irradiating each with celestial brightness. "By his death" Jesus delivers his children from all fear of falling back into

nothing. He has "abolished death," (how energetically does the Apostle announce the very truth I am urging) "and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." The demonstration here is so simple that a child can comprehend it, and so irrefragable that I defy the acutest genius to detect a flaw or frame even a plausible objection.

For, whatever may be doubtful, one thing is incontestable, the death and resurrection of the Redeemer forever establish the truth of his doctrine. I need not exhibit to you the proofs of that death and resurrection. If it were proper to convey such communications from this place, I would make one remark, I would say that, in other days I was accustomed to sift evidence—to subject it to the severest cross examination; that I have scrutinized the testimony on this subject with a more critical jealousy for fear lest a religious education might have biased my mind; and that no fact in history rests upon more "rocky strength of foundation" than the Saviour's death and resurrection. On this great event, you remember, He staked the certainty of his doctrine. The Jews would not be convinced by his miracles, they demanded a sign. "Let him come down from the cross," they said, "and we will believe." He gives them more than they required. He enters the tomb, and emerges, "the resurrection and the life," on the third day. His doctrine, then, is forever established.

But, now, what is the Saviour's doctrine? It is, as we have already seen, the assertion of life and immortality. We said, just now, that upon our very nature there is the impress of a future existence; and it is a striking fact, that revelation takes for granted this irrepressible consciousness. Jesus never once enters into any argument, nor advances any proofs upon this subject. He speaks to man as a being who carries within him a light which had became dim, and which needed only to be trimmed and refreshed. He appeals constantly and directly to a spiritual principle in the human bosom; this he addresses clearly,

solemnly, and with perfect confidence, knowing that his voice would find an instant response.

Another remark. The soul's immortality is taught by Jesus, not in any detached passages; it is a truth which underlies and pervades the whole of his religion. Much he promises to "the life which now is;" but it is "the life that is to come" which he constantly proposes, as the object of our devoutest aspirations. His disciples are not to fear them who can destroy only the body, but him who can cast soul and body into hell. They are to labor, not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. They are not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven. They are not to expect rewards on earth, but in heaven. They are to welcome trials and sacrifices, that they may receive a kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. In short, all terrestrial pomps and charms are to be despised, and persecution, poverty, pain, dungeons, swords, scaffolds, fires, the most frightful martyrdoms are to be preferred to the pleasures of sin. And why all this? Why, because the soul is immortal, because the gain of the whole world would be no sort of equivalent for its loss.

And, oh! the earnestness with which the Saviour pressed this grand doctrine. Man's ignorance of God drew from him his bitterest tears, causing him to utter that intense lamentation, "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." But next to this dismal phenomenon, the spectacle which pierced his heart with the acutest anguish was man's neglect of his spiritual nature. He did not overlook the body; he sympathized with its wants and miseries. He fed it, healed its infirmities, cured its diseases, raised it from the tomb. But it was the soul—its imperial capacities—its magnificent endowments—above all, its eternal life—an existence which shall endure when worlds, stars, suns, shall have expired—it was this that absorbed his thoughts and kindled solicitudes indefatigable and extinguishable; for this he pleaded with unutterable yearnings. His entire ministry—his sermons, his warn-

ings, his entreaties, his tears—was a voice from heaven, proclaiming the immortality of the soul, and beseeching men to awake to a truth so solemn, glorious, consoling, rejoicing, inspiring.

My Friends, I cannot tell how this subject affects you. Even in Christians the cry of the soul is stifled by the clamors of the world and the passions. Here, to-day, in the sanctuary itself, your spiritual discernments are so dull and darkened, that this truth excites scarcely an emotion in your minds. But in the chamber where death has just removed one most dear to you; kneeling beside the bed and gazing upon that form which had so long been the object of your tenderest affections; looking into that pale, sweet face, and feeling that for one word from those lips you would give all which life has or hopes for:—there, oh, there, this doctrine is unspeakably precious. Close your eyes. Do not let your thoughts rest upon the casket, lovely as that is. The soul, the spirit—that which was and is the being you loved—has been taken from this valley of tears, and has entered upon her true life. The angels who rejoiced over her repentance, experience new delights at her emancipation. Could she speak, she would say, in the language of Jesus, "Why seek you the living among the dead?" "If you loved me you would rejoice because I go to my Father." Shall not this assurance sweeten the bitterness of separation? Will you surrender yourself to convulsions of grief, and shed floods of tears, because the imprisoned spirit is set free and exults in everlasting life? Was it only yourself you loved, and the happiness you enjoyed in her society? If you truly loved her, could you mourn and weep, because she has ceased to see, as you see—through organs so limited in their vision—and now sees as she is seen by God? because she no longer knows as you know—with a knowledge which is only a sort of ignorance—but knows even as she is known? because she lives—not as we live—a few years of weakness, infirmity, sorrow, sin—but as God lives—expatiating in spiritual, celestial, immortal existence?

The first fearful trait about death is, the uncertainty as to the something, anything, after death; and you see how the cross supplies such an antidote to these apprehensions, that it may be truly said, "Jesus Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." I wish here to pause for a moment, and—as the matter is of infinite importance—to ask each of you, with individual reference, whether you believe in this glorious doctrine? I know you will answer, To be sure I do, I never had a doubt of it. But if you have never known the misery of an earnest doubt, I am afraid you have never known the rapture of an earnest faith, as to this subject. To rejoice in the full assurance of immortality, you must reflect: you must feel the folly of all the sophistries which infidels can bring against it; you must take in the proofs which reason furnishes, and the demonstration which the Gospel supplies. "If a man die, shall he live again?" Never, in all my life, have I ever known any sort of scepticism as to this question; yet it seems to me I only believed that I believed. Would that I could impart to you the happiness, the triumphant assurance, the transports, with which I now realize its certainty and its magnificence.

II.—Thus far our argument has supposed that man is innocent, and it fortifies us only against the fear of annihilation; but there is another and more awful terror in leaving this world. Man is a sinner. We have seen that he carries within him an instinct of his spiritual nature, and that Jesus constantly takes this for granted. Now his consciousness of guilt is still more clear, and the Saviour always deals with him as a being whose conscience leaves no room for denial or evasion on this point; he takes for granted man's inward sense of transgression and accountability after death for sin. This truth renders death formidable indeed, for the soul then passes into the presence of its judge, and receives that sentence which fixes its destiny amidst the changeless retributions of eternity. And, now, what I say is, that by his death Jesus delivers his

people forever and perfectly from all fear on this score. This is our second article. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Men and brethren, for twenty-five years —ever since it pleased God to call me by his grace and to put me into the ministry—I have sought always and everywhere to preach Christ Jesus and him crucified. As a fact, as a doctrine, as the only foundation of hope, holiness, salvation, Christ has been to me "all and in all;" but never did my faith rest upon the atonement with such a perfect confidence, such a delightful recumbency as now rejoices my whole soul. Sitting beside that departed saint, and hearing her often exclaim, "Not a doubt, not a fear, all is peace and joy and blessedness," I asked her, upon what she relied with such triumphant assurance? "I know," my dearest child, I said, "that 'many daughters have done virtuously, but you have excelled them all,' and members of the church have called and told me how they all loved you." She at once interrupted me. "Do not, my dear father, I beg you, utter one word about me. Speak only of Jesus, his blood and righteousness. I am a poor sinner saved by grace, who feels her unworthiness, and laments that, having so short a life, she did not devote it more entirely to such a Saviour." "How, then, is it that not a cloud not a shadow is upon the brightness of your prospect?" "How?" she replied, looking up into my face with surprise, "How? did He not die for me? does not his blood cleanse from all sin?" Here she was convulsed by one of those paroxysms of agony which nearly suffocated her, during which I heard her murmuring in broken accents, "Father, not my will, but thine." As soon as it had passed, she remarked, with a smile of angelic sweetness, "These are only the throes of the poor body; the spirit is in perfect peace. For your sakes I hope God will spare me these spasms, for I see they overcome you; but for myself, I scarcely feel them, such is the blessedness which

fills my whole being till it runs over. I desire not a pang less than my Saviour sees good for me. He does all things well." And then, resuming her former theme, she said, "Washed in his blood, how can I doubt? Clothed in his spotless righteousness, what can I fear? 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.'"

Our text ascribes the Christian's disenthralment from fear to the "death of Jesus." Socinians tell us of his virtues, his miracles, his example; and if they refer to his crucifixion, it is only as the highest exhibition of disinterested love, or as a proof of the truth of his doctrine—bad reasoning, by the way, for a man's sealing his creed with his blood has nothing to do with its truth. A martyr convinces us of his sincerity, but more men have died for error than for truth. The Scriptures attribute the whole of salvation to the blood, the death of Christ. This fundamental truth, that his death was a real satisfaction for sin, foolish men have denounced as a dogma utterly irrational. But—while the atonement is a mystery—the very mystery which the Apostle declares, "Eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive,"—yet, of this great doctrine, as of immortality, I affirm, that reason and revelation speak with one voice.

Without at all discussing the inspired account of the Fall, it is a matter of palpable observation and experience, that man is a fallen being, that humanity is not in its normal and original purity, as it must have come from the hands of the Creator. Now—admitting this degeneracy—I can form no idea of the Deity which does not inspire the hope that he will interpose to rescue us from ruin, and restore us to his favor and his image.

More than that. Such an expectation is confirmed and raised almost to certainty by multiplied and most significant intimations, which I find in God's conduct towards our apostate world. For, if humanity be abandoned—if, in the divine contemplation, there had been no purpose of

restoration, why has the race been continued? why are we the recipients of so many mercies? why so much pains—such care—so many heaven appointed checks to restrain us from vice? why so many motives to impel us to virtue? why, amidst conscious guilt and ruin, has man always cherished such anticipations of an august deliverer, that Jesus is styled "The Desire of all nations," and the whole creation is represented as "groaning together," struggling in the pangs of a magnificent regeneration? When the old men wept as they remembered the gorgeousness of Solomon's temple, God assured them that the "glory of the latter house should be greater," because the Messiah would appear in its courts. And in man's very nature there is a gospel which, while he mourns his conscious degeneracy, inspires the noblest hopes of a salvation which shall confer upon him a more abundant life than that received at creation—of a redemption to crown him with a glory far transcending that of Paradise.

And then, see, too, how enlightened reason confesses and admires the harmony of this "great salvation" with every attribute of the divine Being. In the satisfaction of Calvary God's justice is satisfied; for, on the very theatre which had witnessed the dishonor of the law, that law is vindicated and magnified: God's holiness is satisfied; for Jesus does not save his people in sin, but from sin. In the Gospel scheme mercy is not a weakness—as it often is in human administrations,—it is the exercise of amazing love and compassion through an expedient which awfully asserts the inviolable majesty of Jehovah's moral government. In short, from the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God a fresh revenue of honor accrues to every perfection of the Deity. They are all blended into a belt of light, a zodiac of softened splendors, which illuminates the earth with joy, irradiates heaven with new raptures, and pours fresh adorable effulgence upon the divine character.

I was right, then, when I affirmed, not only that there is in the doctrine of the atonement nothing to shock my

intellect, but that reason stands ready to welcome such a salvation as the only possible salvation for man—if indeed it be revealed. And is not revealed? Is it not the great revelation of the Gospel? Is it not the Gospel, "the good news," "the glad tidings of great joy"? Upon this point I need not accumulate proofs from the sacred Oracles. Thank God, I am addressing a Christian Church. You not only know the certainty of "this faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation," but you have gladly received it as the foundation of all your faith and hope. Let me only quote a single text, which I select because I am speaking of our deliverance from every apprehension as to the consequences of sin in eternity, and the passage occurs in precisely such an argument addressed by Paul to the Corinthians. "Moreover, brethren," these are his words, "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved." He is recapitulating, you observe, that Gospel which was the substance of all his preaching, the source of all piety to his hearers, and the only ground of salvation. Well, and what is that Gospel? "For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." This, then, is that Gospel. It is not that Christ died as a martyr, but that he "*died for our sins.*" There was an adequate object for that amazing phenomenon, the Lord of life and glory expiring upon the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He who knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us." This is the Gospel; this is the revelation which Paul "received" from God; which is the burden of all "the Scriptures,"—the adoring theme of patriarchs, prophets, apostles; and which, acting by inspiration, he delivered "*first of all*,"—*predicated* as the great doctrine on which all evangelical truth rests,—as the only foundation of salvation which can be laid—the foundation which God has laid—and, building upon which, no man, no matter how multiplied and aggravated his guilt, can ever be disappointed.

Christ having died for our sins—having carried them with him up on the cross, down into the tomb,—and having "risen for our justification,"—his resurrection being the proclamation of heaven that a full satisfaction had been made,—the Holy Spirit assures us that those who believe in him cannot die in their sins. "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Why not? Because in Christ they died, in Christ they rose, in Christ they perfectly satisfied the demands of justice. After this, how can a Christian have a single doubt or fear? Ah, I know the tempter sometimes exerts all his malignity in that trying moment when the child of God is enfeebled by disease, when flesh and heart are failing. Satan is branded by inspiration as "the accuser of the brethren." And never is he more subtle and malicious than when he employs what the Apostle designates as the "power of death;" when he assails the mind during its conflict with the last enemy, arraying before the memory all the sins of the past, and seeking to fill the conscience with alarms. But, let the Christian only remember "whom he has believed;" let him turn from these suggestions of his own faithlessness and vileness, and fix his eyes upon the Cross. One single look there will be enough; all terror will instantly vanish, heavenly peace, assurance, joy, will settle down upon his soul.

To his prophet Zacheriah God disclosed a vision which is full of consolation for us. "And he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist (accuse) him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered, and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set

a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." Here, even in the presence of the Angel of the covenant, the devil appears, and the High Priest himself is charged with defilement. Nor can the man of God repel the impeachment; for, in the light of God's countenance, all his righteousnesses are only as filthy apparel. But there was one who could silence the accuser; and who at once dispels the alarm and confusion of his servant, by assuring him that he was a brand plucked by sovereign grace from the burning, that all his iniquity was taken away, that he should receive white garments and a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him.

III.—The last mournful and fearful thing in death is the parting of all sublunary ties, the disruption of those cords which had so long and closely bound us to the earth. In this view, death is a shipwreck of all our affections, associations, possessions, prospects, hopes and joys. Every thing near and dear to us is comprehended in that word, *Life*. Death rends us away from existence, and seems to consign us to a darkness and sterility which are rendered only the more dismal by the brightness and redundancy of life we see all around us. In this aspect death appears especially gloomy. In this aspect the Gospel is especially rich in revelations which rob the grave of its terrors. But it is just in this view of death, and of the power of the Cross to raise the Christian above all fear and inspire the most glorious anticipations, that a preacher feels the utter inadequacy of all human thought and language.

I have told you that, during the days and nights which it pleased God to allow me to spend in that chamber so filled with heavenly manifestations, my thoughts turned to you. And, last Sabbath, at this very hour, you were thinking of me, your prayers were ascending for me. My beloved brethren, those supplications were not in vain. It was then, above all, that the soul of my child was ravished with illapses of celestial joy which seemed too much

for her to bear, that the hearts of all who were present burned within them, and their eyes overflowed with tears of wonder, love and adoration. "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in me." "My whole being is flooded with unutterable blessedness." "I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." These are some of the passages she repeated again and again; but I can give you no idea of the tones of her voice trembling with delight, of the rapture which shone in her eyes, of the angelic light which suffused her whole countenance. All this was only a faint morning twilight breaking in through the decaying tenement of clay,—only a few feeble rays falling upon a form racked with pain. What, then, must the noontide of glory be to the emancipated spirit exulting in immortal vigor.

We see one dear to us depart in peace, we are assured of the soul's higher, everduring life, and we know that sin has been expiated; but how irrepressible are our yearnings to penetrate the unseen world and learn something of its economy? That thinking, rejoicing being, which was here but a moment since, where is it now? what is it now? She, so long and intimately present with me, so recently conversing with me, how does she now exist? with what society does she now mingle? what are her enjoyments? how does she communicate with other spirits? what are her thoughts, feelings, enjoyments? All that I so long to know, she is this instant experiencing. Would that some voice would solve the problem; that some glimpse could dart upon my mind.

One man, indeed, was caught up into the third heaven, and then brought back to earth. But when we gather round him, and eagerly ask for information compared with which all other researches are contemptible, he dis-

appoints us; he puts his hand upon his mouth; he declares that it is "unlawful" (impossible constituted as we are) to communicate anything as to what he saw and heard. Reclining on her Saviour's bosom, at "the very gate of heaven"—I use her own words,—not at the outside of the gate where Jacob lay and angels could reach him only by a ladder, but inside among the angels,—my daughter again and again said to us, "Would that I had words to utter what I feel, but it is as unspeakable as it is full of glory." In short, the Holy Spirit tells us that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." And, now, if this be so, of course I can only impair the surpassing grandeur of the subject by attempting to say anything upon it.

However,—as the text declares that we know enough of heaven to dissipate all gloomy images of death,—let me stammer out a thought or two; thoughts which are not mine, but which God has revealed to us by his Spirit. Let me falter out some of these ideas, and, then, let me ask how it is that Christians can ever speak of losses, disruptions, separations at death? how we can be so unbelieving as to afflict ourselves—so selfish as not to rejoice, when one we love has escaped from this vale of sorrow, and passed to the full fruition of such "glory, honor, and immortality."

Regard death as a repose from all which makes life a sea of troubles, a ceaseless struggle with fears without and fightings within. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God,"—rest from sin, temptation, affliction, disappointment, fear, pain, sickness, all infirmities of the body, the mind, the spirit.

Regard death as an emancipation from all the gross appetites of the body,—from all those passions those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul,"—and as the full gratification of all the boundless longings of the spirit after the "beauties of holiness," after perfect transformation into the image of God. "We shall be like him,

for we shall see him as he is." "As for me I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." "And they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living water. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes";———all tears of sorrow,—but, oh Lamb of God, Redeemer of my soul, never shalt thou wipe away the tears of love and gratitude with which I will bathe those feet once pierced with cruel nails for me.

Consider death as the translation of the purified spirit from the darkness which now clouds its vision, into the clear azure radiance which bathes and ravishes the "saints in light." "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

View death as the final and complete overthrow of all our spiritual enemies;—as the hour in which we shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us,"—in which we shall everlastingly triumph over the world, over those inward foes whose treacherous power conspires against our salvation, over "the last enemy" himself. This conflict finished, the Christian will exclaim, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" the whole field will then be clear, nothing will be left which can ever molest or make him afraid; his soul will expatiate through eternity, and find only immortal life and glory. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white

robes, and palms in their hands. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence come they? And I said, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb."

Contemplate death as the investiture of the child and heir of God with the full reversion of glory from which he had been so long debarred in this house of his bondage. To convey some idea of this glory, inspiration has heaped up and exhausted all glowing and dazzling imagery. We are told of a city whose streets are gold;—of rivers of water pure as crystal;—of the walls of the city resplendent with the mingled effulgence of diamonds, amethysts, sapphires, every radiant jewel;—of a building so magnificent that God alone could be its architect, rearing and garnishing it with all the exuberance of celestial skill and affluence;—of regal sceptres, diadems, thrones;—of a glory which shall cause cherubim and seraphim forever to gaze upon the saints and to "admire in them" the matchless beauties of the Redeemer himself;—of a glory, an exceeding glory, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—of the mediatorial glory of the Son of God in whose victorious honors all the ransomed shall share, being glorified together with him, "sitting with him in his throne even as he sits in his Father's throne."

We speak of the bitter separations caused by death; and to the living they are bitter, heart rending. But think of the society into which the soul is then introduced. Here, how unsatisfying are all our friendships; how impossible, even in the dearest associations, to find perfect congeniality and sympathy; how foolish to apply the term *permanent* to unions so easily impaired, and which, however sincere, must to-morrow be dissolved. In heaven we shall experience all the delights of the purest love, of the most tender intimacies, of the divinest communications,

of harmonies which Jesus declares shall be as ineffable and eternal as those between him and his Father. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the justified made perfect."

I had just repeated this glowing passage to my dying child, when, lifting her eyes to heaven, she at once said, "Yes, and oh, to Him, to Him, to Jesus." Take in that thought. "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" death accomplishes this prayer, death wafts me to the arms of my Redeemer. Who can conceive the rapture of that meeting—the eternity of blessedness concentrated in that first embrace? There he is! that Jesus in whom I believed; in whom—when I saw him not—I rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My beloved is now mine, and I am his forever; nor can height, nor depth, nor length, nor breadth ever again separate me from this "fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely",—ever again interrupt the seraphic ardors which absorb my soul.

Nor only this outward and ravishing beauty of the divine "Mediator of the new covenant." Death bears the purified spirit "to God;" reveals the glories of the Godhead spiritually, directly, clearly. This is the beatific vision—the soul's highest delight, its perfection in knowledge, sanctity, love, bliss. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

But I shall never have done; and after having said all, I would feel that I had said nothing—that I had only faltered out some imbecilities and incoherencies. However, these incoherencies and imbecilities are not rhapsodies, they are—to employ the Apostle's idea—the inarticulate lispings of a child who catches some glimpses of the

excellent glory vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit, but can neither comprehend nor utter what he feels. And, now, enter if you can,—enter as well as you can—into these thoughts, unite them, give full plumage to your faith, let imagination transport you to those abodes of purity, love, and blessedness. After this, come back to earth, and say to yourself,—My friend, my father, my mother, my wife, my child has passed from a world of sorrow, and is now in full possession of all this felicity, comprehends all this felicity, experiences all these joys, raptures, ecstasies; and will be entranced with new, ever increasing joys, raptures, ecstasies, while the ages of eternity roll on.

My brethren, my very dear brethren, I say again, that I know not how these truths affect you; for my own part, I am almost overwhelmed by the reflection, that for man, for sinners, such things have been prepared by God. If a single shadow could dim the triumphant exultation of my soul, it would be a doubt whether such a destiny can indeed be ours. But eternal truth dissipates all doubt. God's word dispels every fear and gives an assurance as immovable as his throne. On every page of this volume I find the certainty of these things forever settled. Above all, when I fix my eyes upon the Cross, I glory in a faith which "is the substance"—the unequivocal evidence—of these unseen realities. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" What treasures can God's wealth possess, God's love bestow, which are too rich after such a donation? "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

Yes, life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel. Heaven, and all we can conceive, and all we cannot conceive of heaven,—all that Jesus enjoys, all that God can confer in heaven, is ours." "All things are ours, whether life, or death, things present, or things to come, all are ours;" and ours by no foreign conveyance, no doubtful claim, but indefeasibly, by the most amazing title, by our new birthright; ours because we are the children and

heirs of God. My soul, if these truths are unmeaning sounds to thee, if they do not inspire the noblest gratitude and joy, the fault is thine own; thou art "loading thyself with thick clay," thou art debasing thyself in the pursuit of "lying vanities," and forgetting a heritage which turns the whole earth into contempt. After this, shall death be formidable to me? When one I love has been mercifully removed from this scene of tribulation to those mansions of glory, can I wish to bring her back again? Can I speak of death as a gloomy valley?—ah, radiant gloom, brightened by her Saviour's presence, through which angels bore her rejoicing spirit up to the bosom of her God. Can I mourn any loss she has suffered in death?—inestimable loss by which she has gained "an inheritance among the saints in light." Shall I represent death as a shipwreck?—blessed shipwreck, which has rescued her from all the storms, surges, fears, sufferings of a weary voyage, and stranded her soul upon "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

But it is time to finish. My friends, God declares that when he afflicts a pastor, it is "for your consolation and salvation." Upon some of you, all my preaching from this desk and from house to house, all my exhortations and tears have been fruitless; shall my repeated sorrows also be in vain? Is it not high time to awake out of sleep and come to Christ, that he may give you life? Twice, and in quick succession, have my afflictions appealed to the young in this congregation, and admonished them that death envies those who seem to bid fairest for many years. I implore the young not to despise these touching, piercing calls from eternity, but to cast themselves upon the Saviour and receive the mercy he offers. Some of you are advanced in life; is it not unutterable infatuation to put away the thought of death, and, while "gray hairs are here and there upon you," still to neglect so great salvation? All of you, all of you, before it shall be forever too late, be warned, be wise. This immortality is yours; will you make it an immortality of darkness and despair? To you, all the ex-

exceeding riches of Christ's atonement, all the glory and blessedness of heaven are freely proffered; will you reject them, and plant thorns in your dying pillow, and precipitate yourselves into abysses of everlasting misery?

But I have no heart to-day for such gloomy thoughts. Christians, my dearly beloved brethren, I turn to you. Would that I could make you feel this subject as I do; after all, however, if you are Christians, the truths you have heard are to you the realities of faith. And, now, is it not deplorable that you still regard death as most of you do? that—while in the New Testament death is constantly represented as a consummation "far better" than life; while the first Christians had "a desire to depart and be with Christ; while they were "ever looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the Son of God;" while they habitually viewed the body as only "the tent"* in which the soul tarries a few days, and rejoiced in the certainty that as soon as the tabernacle should be taken down the soul would enter into "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" while they groaned, earnestly desiring to exchange this temporary abode for celestial mansions, for royal garments in the skies; while they longed that "mortality should be swallowed up in life"—the mortal life be merged in the immortal;——— is it not lamentable, that, while these aspirations glowed in their bosoms, and these prospects filled them with rapture, the grave appears to us thronged with dreadful aspects, we shrink from death as the direst calamity, anticipate it as a sad necessity, compared with which the weariest and most wretched earthly life is a sort of paradise. How is it, that our theology, our sermons, our prayers, our very hymns are all wrong as to a matter of such infinite importance?

Alas, the reason is too manifest. We have no realizing sense of our immortality. We plunge into the world, and are so absorbed by its cares and projects, that eternal life is to us only an empty idea. We do not meditate

* 2 Corinthians 5: 1—5.

upon the Cross and its soul subliming revelations, and hence do not glory in it, nor experience its power to lift us above all fear of condemnation. We drive hard after earthly pleasures, riches, honors, devote no time to heavenly contemplations, and thus debase our spiritual capacities, and avert our eyes from the pleasures, riches, honors reserved for us beyond the skies.

I beseech you, I adjure you, let not the afflictions of a pastor who loves you with his whole heart be lost upon you. If you frustrate the gracious purpose of God towards you in these strokes under which my heart bleeds, he may send others upon me, and "break me with breach upon breach." Have pity upon me, O, my friends, and spare me, "lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." But recollect, if your pastor's afflictions will not do, God may turn his hand upon you, and chasten you in his sore displeasure, and heap desolation upon your hearths.

At all events, sickness, sorrow, death must one day enter your habitations. Prepare to meet them. Ponder the truths to which you have listened, that you may be armed for the trying hour. I bow my knees to the Father of mercy, that your dear children may be continued to you; but O, give yourselves no rest, give God no rest, day nor night, until they be all gathered to Jesus;—that so, if they should be taken, you may know the unspeakable solace which sweetens my otherwise overwhelming bereavements.

I feel that there has been much which is personal in this discourse, but I know you will bear it with indulgence. The thoughts and emotions which, while I sat in that glorified chamber, exalted my soul to heaven in the consciousness of new and ravishing manifestations of the Redeemer "in me,"—and which have vainly struggled for utterance here to-day, may appear to you too hallowed for such a public communication. They at first seemed to me as revelations which, like Mary, I ought to "keep and ponder in my own heart." But the more I have mused on them, the more has the fire burned, and the

more have I been compelled to speak with my tongue. "What I shew you in secret," says Jesus, "that speak ye in the light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the house tops." And, now, why should I not open to you all my heart, and tell you, that the last Thursday was the only real thanksgiving day I ever passed in my life. It was, you remember, the day appointed for the public acknowledgment of mercies received from God. Its early dawn found me beside the couch upon which lay, in all the surpassing loveliness of death, that form so long and tenderly cherished. There I sat "in bitterness for my first-born," but serene with heavenly consolations; and there the tempter dared to intrude, and to profane even the sanctity of that shrine with his loathsome suggestions. Yes, he whispered, this is thanksgiving day; and you at least ought to observe it with devout gratitude; for the God you worship has loaded you with benefits. Without any fault of yours, nay in spite of your earnest efforts, the country you love is rent by civil war. Your dear native State has been invaded. The place of your birth, the scenes of your childhood and youth, are laid waste. Your earliest friends, all who have cherished you and been endeared to you from your infancy, are driven as exiles from their old ancestral homes, and the temple in which you first preached Jesus is hung in sackcloth. You, too, are reduced to comparative poverty; and, in a few brief months, blow after blow has relentlessly beat upon your heart, and torn from you those in whom your life was bound up. You, at least, ought to adore the tender mercies of your God to-day. He has been very good to you. ———With such infernal thoughts was my soul insulted by the arch enemy of God and man; but oh! the peace of God which passeth all understanding, the gratitude and joy which overflowed in gushing tears, as I turned away, and exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." And all day long that Psalm made melody in my heart; and "in the night that song was with me, and my prayer unto the God of

my life." Yes, I then knew all that David could have experienced, when he said, "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and think on thee in the night watches."

Be prepared, my brethren, for the hour when your homes shall become houses of mourning; be prepared to meet death yourselves. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Study carefully the text upon which I have attempted to preach to you, replenish your minds with its exhaustless consolations, and supplicate the aids of the Spirit whose office it is to "take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us." Life and immortality,—take in all the glory of these words. The mansions to which Jesus has gone, to which those so dear to you have passed, and the attractions of which you now feel,—let those mansions be kept steadily in view. Above all, ascend Mount Calvary, and make its summit the Pisgah of your souls. Live near the Cross, in contrite confession of sin, in simple childlike faith, in adoring gratitude, in reverential sympathy with that amazing mystery of love, that altar and that sacrifice.

Ah! I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away;
But on my Lord relying,
I hail the happy day.

The day when I must enter
Upon a world unknown,
My helpless soul I venture
On Jesus Christ alone.

He once, a spotless victim,
Upon Mount Calv'ry bled,
Jehovah did afflict him,
And bruise him in my stead.

Hence, all my hope arises,
  Unworthy as I am,
My soul most surely prizes
  The sin-atoning Lamb.

To him by grace united,
  I joy in him alone,
And now, by faith, delighted,
  Behold him on his throne.

There he is interceding
  For all who on him rest,
The grace from him proceeding
  Shall waft me to his breast.

Then, with the saints in glory,
  The grateful song I'll raise,
And chant my blissful story,
  In high seraphic lays.

Free grace, redeeming merit,
  And sanctifying love,
Of Father, Son and Spirit,
  Shall charm the courts above.